United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General begins two-day official visit to Argentina; has meetings with President Menem and Argentinian Foreign Minister.

+ In report to Security Council, Secretary-General says UNPROFOR needs extra 8,250 troops, 150 military observers and 275 police monitors to implement mandate in Sarajevo and central Bosnia.

+ Secretary-General to send special mission to Afghanistan on 24 March to seek leaders' views on how United Nations can best aid national reconciliation and reconstruction.

+ Tajikistan asks Security Council to give United Nations peace-keeping status to Commonwealth of Independent States forces on its territory; says terrorist acts on Tajik-Afghan border threaten regional security.

+ Secretary-General expresses alarm over violence in run-up to El Salvador elections; urges all parties to exercise restraint and to work for implementation of 1992 peace accords.

+ Draft programme of action for Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States "in good shape," according to Chairman of Preparatory Committee.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today began a two-day official visit to Argentina by meeting with the country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Emilio Cardenas. He later met with President Carlos Saúl Menem, and expressed his appreciation for Argentina's contribution to United Nations activities and its role in the Security Council. They discussed the Organization's financial crisis and ways to overcome it, as well as President Menem's proposal for a corps of "white helmets" to fight world hunger. The two also discussed Haiti, and agreed on the need to continue efforts to unblock the impasse in the implementation of the Governors Island Agreement.

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The Secretary-General and Mrs. Boutros-Ghali later attended a lunch hosted in their honour by Ambassador Carlos Muniz, President of the Argentine Council for International Relations. He later paid a courtesy visit to the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, Julio Salvador Nazareno, and met with Argentina's Foreign Minister, Guido Di Tella. Tonight, the Secretary-General was scheduled to meet with members of the Argentine Council for Foreign Relations, and to address a dinner of the Council.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the Security Council increase the authorized strength of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) with a view to demilitarizing Sarajevo and keeping the peace in central Bosnia. In a report dated 11 March, he said UNPROFOR needed an extra 8,250 troops, 150 military observers and 275 police monitors. The Council, in resolution 900 (1994), had asked the Secretary-General to appoint an official to help restore normal life in Sarajevo, and to report on procedures to extend United Nations protection to the towns of Maglaj, Mostar and Vitez.

The Secretary-General said 2,200 of the extra troops would be needed in and around Sarajevo, and 6,050 in central Bosnia, including Mostar and Vitez. A further 1,500 would be needed if the Council were to extend the safe-area concept to Maglaj. He warned that UNPROFOR currently lacked the military resources to achieve its objectives and could lose the initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite numerous opportunities for progress. If Member States did not provided the necessary personnel, its mandate would have to be modified. "It would be a tragedy for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina if the present opportunity were lost for lack of resources," he concluded.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to send a special mission to Afghanistan on 24 March to seek the views of a broad spectrum of Afghan leaders on how the United Nations can best aid national reconciliation and reconstruction. The mission will report to the Secretary-General, with recommendations for appropriate action, according to a United Nations spokesman.

The mission will be headed by Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri. Sitirios Mousouris, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, will act as his Deputy. The mission will include a number of other officials and will receive support from United Nations personnel in the region. As the principal Afghan leaders want the mission to visit their country as soon as possible, the Secretary-General is proceeding on the assumption that they will ensure adequate security conditions and freedom of access, the spokesman noted.

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Tajikistan has asked the Security Council to grant United Nations peace-keeping status to forces from the Commonwealth of Independent States now stationed on its territory. In a letter to the Security Council dated 11 March, Emomali Rakhmonov, Head of State and Chairman of the Suprememe Council of Tajikistan, said armed formations of the Tajik opposition, supported by some Afghan mujahidin groups, were carrying out terrorist attacks along the Tajik-Afghan border. The violence threatened stability and security in the entire region, and United Nations assistance was needed if a cease-fire were to succeed and armed formations to be disarmed.

The President noted that the agreement to deploy forces from the Commonwealth of Independent States in Tajikistan had been concluded within the framework of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, in order to guarantee the country's security and territorial integrity, and the stability of the region as a whole.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali yesterday expressed alarm about the violence in the closing days of the election campaign in El Salvador, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General appealed to all parties concerned, in the spirit of the historic 1992 peace accords, to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid violence and divisive rhetoric.

The Secretary-General said that the elections should be an occasion for reunifying Salvadorian society and promoting democracy, and that the population should work together to implement the peace accords.

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The draft programme of action for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is "in good shape," with the notable exception of the text on finance and technology, according to the Chairman of the Conference's Preparatory Committee. She made that comment on Friday as the Committee concluded a week of work for the Global Conference, which will be held from 25 April to 6 May in Barbados.

Speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, Algeria expressed regret that their partners had not been more forthcoming in such key areas as financing and monitoring. The viability of the programme of action was at stake, he said, adding that the outcome of the Preparatory Committee was "rather disappointing." Trinidad and Tobago, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, also expressed disappointment that little had been accomplished to guarantee financing for sustainable development. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, said the Barbados Conference would test the international community's commitment to the challenge of sustainable development.

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